



Pete Ricketts
Governor

State of Nebraska

Department of Agriculture
Greg Ibach
Director

P.O. Box 94947
Lincoln, NE 68509-4947
(402) 471-2341
Fax: (402) 471-6876
www.nda.nebraska.gov

April 15, 2015

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretaries Burwell and Vilsack,

In 1977 the original *Dietary Goals* (eventually renamed Dietary Guidelines) were written and published to provide all Americans with a guide to a healthier lifestyle and improved dietary habits. I am writing to express my concerns that the most recent draft of the Dietary Guidelines, filed by the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, strays far from the spirit and objective of the guidelines by over-reaching its pre-established function. I also am concerned with the draft document as it is negligent in highlighting sound, scientifically proven nutrition standards.

Verbiage in the draft guidelines referring to "agricultural sustainability" is a true example of overreach by a Committee whose responsibility is to provide dietary guidance, not an opinion piece on off-topic issues. By including environmental sustainability policy statements as part of the draft proposal, the Committee wanders from its true mission and diminishes the overall value of the guidelines.

As a representative of one of the largest livestock producing states in the United States, I can tell you our ranchers and farmers implement and support sustainable agricultural practices every day. It is a necessity for operations that want to continue to be viable long into the future. But regardless of this fact, sustainability has no place in a report that should be solely directed at providing consumers with scientific-based dietary information.

Those same farmers and ranchers are vividly aware of the importance that meat protein plays in the daily nutritional needs of Americans. For decades they have supplied the nation with lean beef and pork products that have been regularly included as part of a healthy daily diet, as outlined in previous Dietary Guidelines and backed by scientific studies and peer reviews.

Burwell, Vilsack

Page 2

April 15, 2015

However, in the executive summary of the Advisory Committee's report, lean meat is an obvious exclusion in the summary for a healthy diet plan. It borders on travesty that lean meat is relegated to a footnote. As Shalene McNeill, a respected, nationally known registered dietitian and nutrition scientist deftly pointed out in a public meeting with the USDA and DHHS, excluding lean meat from a healthy diet grossly ignores nutrition science and previous editions of the Dietary Guidelines.

Understanding that the thousands of dietitians and nutritionists who will review the final Dietary Guidelines will likely focus on the executive summary, it is critical that lean meat is appropriately positioned as an essential part of a daily diet.

I strongly urge you to remove the language regarding sustainability and reassess the Committee's decision to downplay and negate the importance of lean red meat in daily diets. These changes to the draft of the Dietary Guidelines are critical to creating valid, justifiable guidance that is truly representative of relevant and sound nutritional policy.

Thank you for taking action on this important issue.

Sincerely,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Ibach", with a stylized, cursive script.

Greg Ibach
Director